

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS
35TH SENATE DISTRICT
TEMPORARY PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
MAJORITY LEADER



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

ROOM 907 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2585
FAX (518) 426-6811

ROOM 332 STATE CAPITOL
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2715
FAX (518) 426-6844

DISTRICT
28 WELLS AVENUE, BUILDING 3
YONKERS, NEW YORK 10701
(914) 423-4031
FAX (914) 423-0979

E-MAIL
SCOUSINS@NYSENATE.GOV

August 21, 2019

Mr. Anthony A. Lewis
Regional President
1300 I St NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Lewis:

We write to express our concern over the termination of your contract with Rye Brook's RNN network to produce and broadcast Fios News1. We ask that you reconsider a renewal of your RNN partnership, which has delivered vital local news coverage to New Yorkers for more than a decade. As a telecommunications company who operates through a state franchise license, it is critical that Verizon considers the public interest in all business decisions.

Since 2009, Fios News1 has provided award-winning local coverage for Long Island and the Hudson Valley. When Verizon entered this regional market, you expressed a commitment to the community and its local issues. At that time, a Verizon spokesperson stated that "the community is the star" and that "it's more about the community than it is about the news." We could not agree more, which is why we ask that you return to the bargaining table in the hopes of negotiating a fair contract extension that continues to provide New Yorkers with access to high-quality local news in the communities you serve.

Local news is the driving force behind robust civic engagement. Academic studies have found that less local reporting is associated with lower voter turnout, less engagement with local officials, and higher costs for local governments. Against the backdrop of a print news industry that continues to shed jobs and consolidate ownership, the loss of Fios News1's local cable news coverage would further impede the public's ability to be informed on local and regional matters.

Moreover, as a major regional employer and corporate leader, Verizon should seek to avoid the immediate consequence of the termination of this contract: the layoff of more than 150 employees. Many of these workers have strong ties to the community and vital knowledge that make them uniquely suited to deliver this service. The impact of their loss would be felt widely, and we hope you will work with us to retain as many of these high-quality employees as possible.

We firmly believe that continuation of quality local news coverage is in the best interest both of Verizon and of the communities you serve. It is critical that Verizon maintain high-quality local news services through Fios News 1, and we ask that you align your conduct to ensure this goal is met.

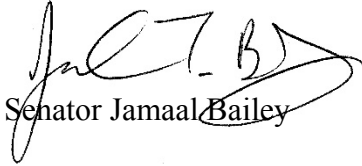
Sincerely,



Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Temporary President and
Majority Leader



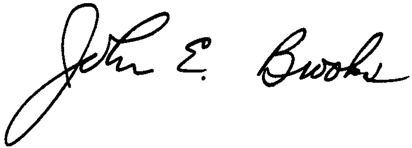
Senator Kevin Parker
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and
Telecommunications



Senator Jamaal Bailey



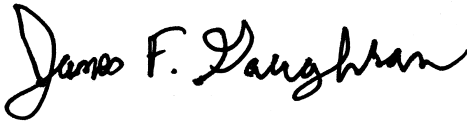
Senator Alessandra Biaggi



Senator John Brooks



Senator David Carlucci



Senator James Gaughran



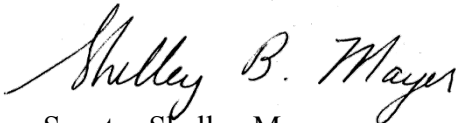
Senator Pete Harckham



Senator Anna Kaplan



Senator Todd Kaminsky



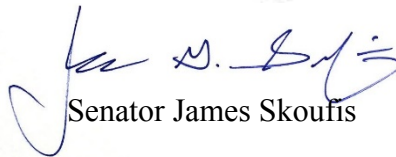
Senator Shelley Mayer



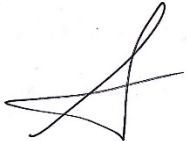
Senator Monica Martinez



Senator Jennifer Metzger



Senator James Skoufis



Senator Kevin Thomas